



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Growers vote to maintain Asparagus Commission

OLYMPIA – Washington's asparagus growers have voted to maintain the Washington Asparagus Commission. In a just completed referendum, 113 of the 161 producers who returned valid ballots voted to continue the commission.

A group of producers had petitioned the Director of Agriculture to terminate the commission. Public hearings on the proposal were held in December with both supporters and opponents of the commission calling for a referendum vote on the issue. Ballots were mailed in mid-April to 263 asparagus producers, with 161 producers casting a valid ballot by the May 8 deadline.

The commission, formed in 1991, is charged with the tasks of monitoring trade issues, promoting asparagus both domestically and in foreign markets, and pursuing research that will benefit the asparagus industry. Commission activities are funded by an assessment of one percent of the gross receipts at the first point of sale of asparagus. Growers last year produced 34,200 tons of asparagus on about 19,000 acres.

Approval of the proposal to terminate the commission required 51 percent of the producers representing at least 51 percent of asparagus production of the producers eligible to vote. Only 18 percent of the eligible producers, representing 33 percent of the production, voted to terminate the commission.

Notice of the referendum results are being sent to growers today.

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Note to editors: A copy of the Asparagus Commission's marketing order (WAC 16-557) is available on the department's Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/agr/asparagus>.